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ABSTRACT

In this lesson plan, students learn the rules and conventions of haiku, study examples by Japanese masters, and create haiku of their own. Its 4 lessons seek to help students be able to: (1) describe the traditional rules and conventions of haiku; (2) interpret examples of haiku; (3) characterize the image-evoking power of haiku; (4) develop a vocabulary and ideas for writing haiku; and (5) compose a haiku based on a personal experience. Intended for grades 3-5, the plan offers suggestions on preparing to teach this lesson. It also notes subject areas covered (language arts, literature, and Asian literature and history), time required to complete the lesson, skills used and taught in the lesson, and the standards developed by professional associations or governments that are related to the lesson. Activities to extend the lesson and further resources conclude the lesson plan. (SR)

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Can You Haiku?

Ladybug
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◂ BACK TO
Home
Lesson Plans

SEARCH EDSITEMENT

Introduction

A giant firefly:
that way, this way, that way, this --
and it passes by.

--Issa (1762-1826), from Haiku for People

Haiku show us the world in a water drop, providing a tiny lens through which to glimpse the miracle and mystery of life. Combining close observation with a moment of reflection, this simple yet highly sophisticated form of poetry can help sharpen students' response to language and enhance their powers of self-expression. In this lesson, students learn the rules and conventions of haiku, study examples by Japanese masters, and create haiku of their own.

Guiding Questions: How are haiku poems composed? How do they differ from other forms of poetry? How does a haiku paint a picture or create an image with just a few words? What makes this form of poetry seem so personal, intimate, and appealing?

Learning Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe the traditional rules and conventions of haiku.
- Interpret examples of haiku.
- Characterize the image-evoking power of haiku.
- Develop a vocabulary and ideas for writing haiku.
- Compose a haiku based on a personal experience.

Preparing to Teach This Lesson

1 This lesson plan consists of four learning activities that you can use together as a unit or adapt separately to your curricular needs.

2 Review the suggested activities, then download and duplicate any online materials you will need. If desired, you can bookmark specific web pages so that students can access relevant online materials directly. (See Resource Links for a guide to locating online materials.)

3 For guidance on talking about and interpreting haiku, explore the "Haiku by Basho" section of the AskAsia website, an interactive introduction to this seventeenth century master who pioneered the haiku tradition, and the Haiku for People

SUBJECT AREAS ▸

Literature & Language Arts: Poetry

Literature & Language Arts: World

Literature &History:World:Asia

GRADE LEVELS ▸

3-5

TIME REQUIRED ▸

Four to five class periods

SKILLS ▸

reading literary texts
literary analysis
literary interpretation
vocabulary development
creative writing

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT ▸

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

1. Culture

c. explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture.

9. Global Connections

a. explore ways that language, art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements may facilitate global understanding or lead to misunderstanding.

NCTE/IRA List of Standards for the English Language Arts

1. Students read a wide range of

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website, which takes a more contemporary approach, celebrating haiku's development into a form of poetry practiced around the world.

Suggested Activities

Reading Haiku
The Rules of Haiku
Haiku Warm-Up
Writing Haiku

Reading Haiku Provide students with a selection of haiku from those available through the AskAsia website at Haiku by Basho and Haiku for People. Include both classic and contemporary examples in your selection. Have members of the class read each poem aloud and ask students to comment on similarities they notice among them. Through this discussion, help students recognize that haiku are:

- Very short: just three lines usually fewer than twenty syllables long.
- Descriptive: most haiku focus sharply on a detail of nature or everyday life.
- Personal: most haiku express a reaction to or reflection on what is described.
- Divided into two parts: as they read haiku aloud, students should find that each includes a turning point, often marked by a dash or colon, where the poet shifts from description to reflection, or shifts from close-up to a broader perspective.

The Rules of Haiku Drawing on the students' observations, provide an outline of the main rules for writing haiku, as explained at Haiku by Basho and Haiku for People:

- Form: Traditional Japanese haiku have seventeen syllables divided into three lines of five syllables, seven syllables, and five syllables respectively. These syllable counts are often ignored when haiku are written in other languages, but the basic form of three short lines, with the middle line slightly longer than the other two, is usually observed.
- Structure: Haiku divide into two parts, with a break coming after the first or second line, so that the poem seems to make two separate statements that are related in some unexpected or indirect way. In Japanese, this break is marked by what haiku poets call a "cutting word." In English and other languages, the break is often marked by punctuation. This two-part structure is important to the poetic effect of a haiku, prompting a sense of discovery as one reads or a feeling of sudden insight.
- Language: Haiku should include what Japanese poets call a *kigo* -- a word that gives the reader a clue to the season being described. The kigo can be the name of a season (autumn, winter) or a subtler clue, such as a reference to the harvest or new fallen snow. Through the years, certain signs of the seasons have become conventional in Japanese haiku:

print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works. (more)

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience. (more)
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics). (more)
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. (more)
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. (more)
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts. (more)
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. (more)
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social

cherry blossoms are a kigo for spring, mosquitoes a kigo for summer. Sometimes, too, the kigo will refer to an individual moment in the natural cycle, such as dawn or moonrise, without reference to a particular season. The kigo is also important to the haiku's effect, anchoring the experience it describes in a poetic here and now that helps sharpen the imaginative focus.

- Subject: Haiku present a snapshot of everyday experience, revealing an unsuspected significance in a detail of nature or human life. Haiku poets find their subject matter in the world around them, not in ancient legends or exotic fantasies. They write for a popular audience and give their audience a new way to look at things they have probably overlooked in the past.

  This same point of view can be found in traditional Japanese woodblock prints (called "ukiyo-e"), which distill a timeless beauty from the constantly shifting scene of daily life. For examples of woodblock prints that can help students visualize the world of haiku, visit the Ukiyo-e Museum of the Nagoya Broadcast Network, accessible through the Teaching (and Learning) About Japan website on EDSITEment, and browse the galleries called "Rain and Snow" and "A Sense of Journey." In each gallery, click on the small image to view a larger version with an interpretative caption, then click the larger version to view the image at maximum size.

Haiku Warm-Up As preparation for writing their own haiku, have students brainstorm a glossary of words they might use, based on the rules and conventions of this form of poetry. Begin with the kigo, asking students to suggest words that would give a clue to the season in their haiku (e.g., robin, crocus, Final Four for spring; heatwave, fireworks, grasshopper for summer; jack-o-lantern, harvest, kickoff for autumn; icicle, hibernate, holly for winter). Then, for each season, have students choose an occurrence that might be the subject of a haiku and brainstorm descriptive language that would help a reader visualize that scene. List their suggestions on the chalkboard and use this exercise to help students generate ideas for their haiku, encouraging them to see the range of possibilities beyond a description of nature.

Writing Haiku Finally, have students write a haiku based on some personal experience, using at least one of the words they have brainstormed in class. Pair students to edit and suggest improvements to one another's work, then hold an in-class haiku festival, having each student read his or her poem aloud. Although haiku do not traditionally have titles, you might invite students to suggest titles for their classmates' work as a way to encourage discussion and a constructive atmosphere of critical response.

Extending the Lesson

Invite students to submit their haiku to the Mainichi Daily News, which publishes a monthly selection of "Haiku in English" from writers around the world. At the paper's English-language website, students can also read a wide selection of present-day haiku, including recent winners of the Mainichi Haiku Contest. Haiku can be submitted by email to mdn@mainichi.co.jp.

roles. (more)

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities. (more)
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). (more)

View your state's standards

Students can also create their own haiku anthology on your school website, or display their haiku in a hallway or on a library bulletin board. For art teachers, haiku can provide a springboard for lessons on print-making or for creating works based on nature subjects.

Resource Links

AskAsia

- For Educators
  - Instructional Resources
    - Asian Topics
      - Haiku by Basho
- Gateway to Asia
  - Asia Studies Virtual Library
    - Individual Countries/Territories Resources: Japan
      - Language
        - Literature
          - Haiku
            - Haiku for People
- Information/News
  - New Site Links
    - Asian Newspapers
      - Mainichi Shimbun
        - Mainichi Daily News
          - Haiku in English

Teaching (and Learning) About Japan

- ukiyo-e
  - The Ukiyo-e Museum of the Nagoya Broadcast Network